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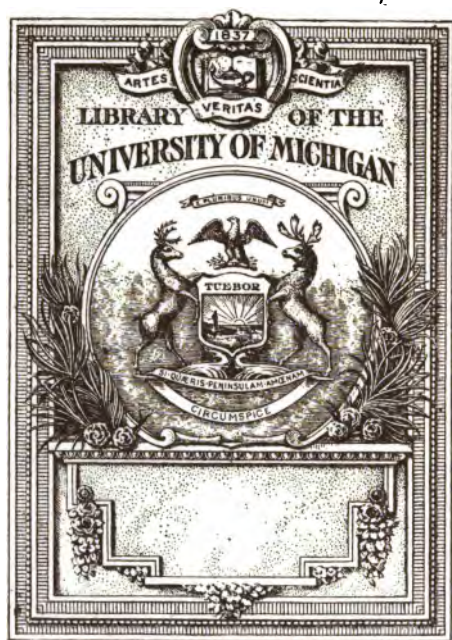
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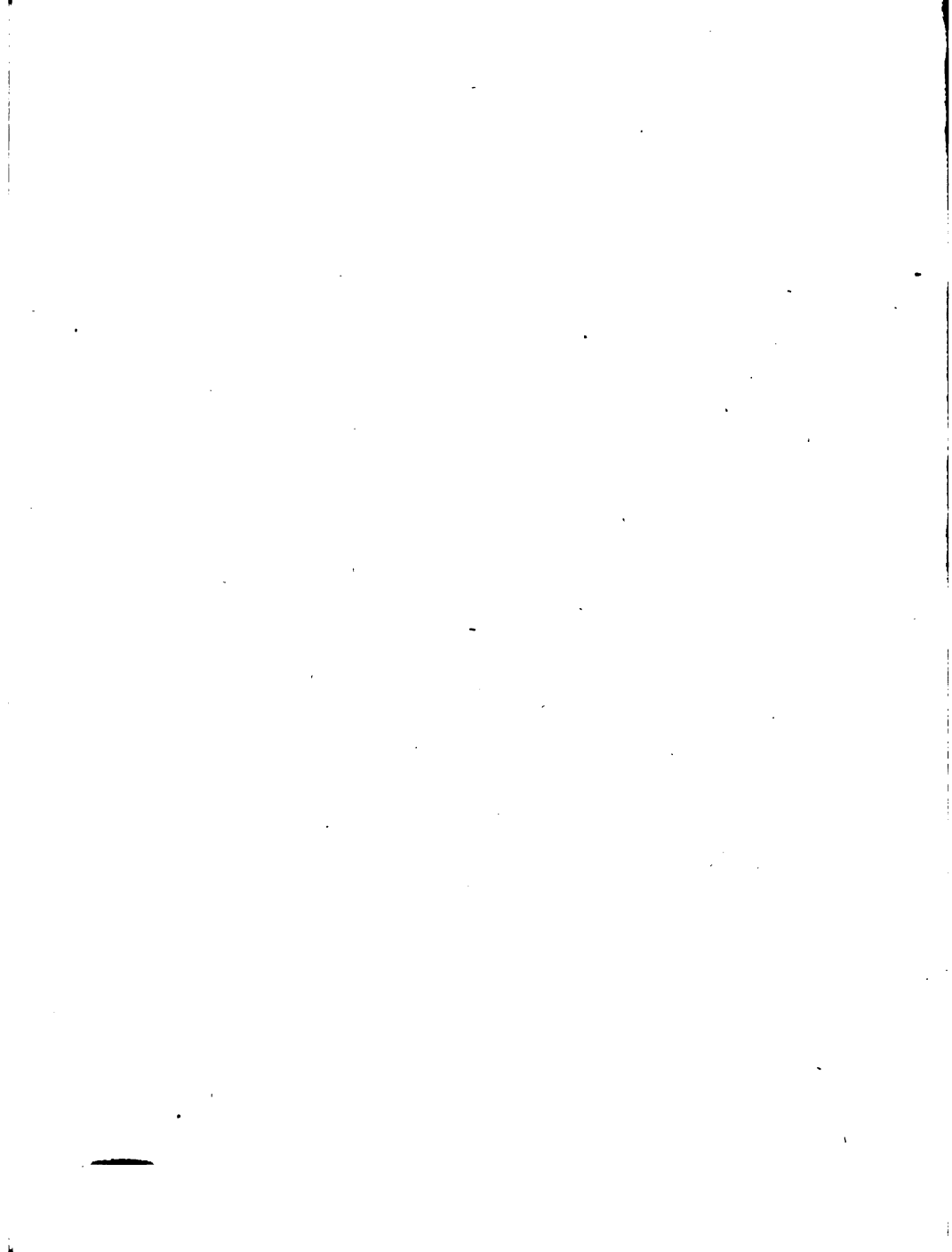


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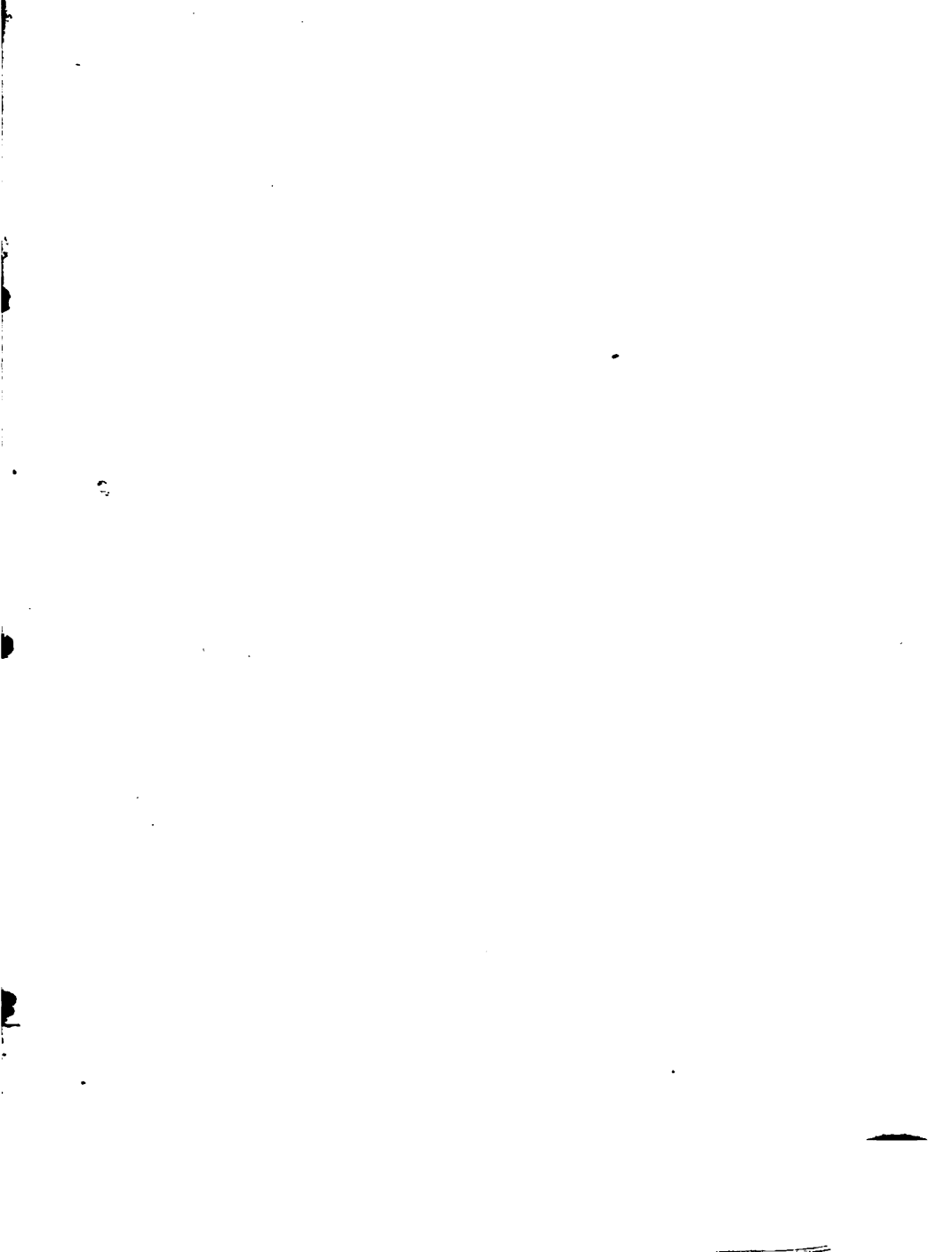


**YALE UNIVERSITY PRIZE POEM**

**1906**









**YALE UNIVERSITY PRIZE POEM**

**1906**

**THE BIRTHRIGHT**

**A ROMANTIC COMEDY OF OLD FRANCE**

**BY**

**GEORGE BURTON HOTCHKISS**

**NAUGATUCK  
THE PERRY PRESS  
1906**



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**PREFATORY NOTE**

This poem received the ninth award of the prize offered by Professor Albert Stanburrough Cook to Yale University for the best unpublished verse, the Committee of Award being Professors Charles Sears Baldwin, Henry van Dyke, and George Rice Carpenter.

## DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

LIONHARD, *Count of Aquitaine.*

ROLAND,            }  
GEOFFREY,        } *his Sons.*

RICHARD, *Count of Brittany.*

VIVIAN, *his Daughter.*

COUNTESS OF AQUITAINE.

MINSTRELS, HUNSMEN, SOLDIERS, ETC.

.....

AUTHOR'S NOTE.—The action of this comedy is represented as of the XIIIth Century, but historical faithfulness is not claimed for it. An attempt has been made, however, to embody in it the spirit of the French mediæval times as I have found it in Old French literature, taking only such liberties as the license of the romancer may allow.

The first song in Act I. is a translation from Marie de France's *Loi de Chievrefuelli*, lines 44-78. The song in Act IV. is translated from the *Chanson de Roland*, lines 645-667. The second song in Act II. is translated from Panard's *The Two Loves*.

# THE BIRTHRIGHT

## ACT I

*Hall in the Castle of the COUNT OF AQUITAINE.*

*COUNTESS and a number of MINSTRELS discovered.*

MINSTREL. [*Sings*]

When Tristram hears the peasant's tale,  
His heart is freed from all its bale;  
For, since the queen is coming nigh,  
He 'll see her ere she passes by.  
Straightway he seeks a woody brake  
Along the road which she must take;  
There finds a stocky hazel-tree,  
Peels off its bark, and carefully  
Inscribes it with his name; the queen  
Will see and know what this may mean,  
For often in the former days  
They trysted by such cunning ways.  
Then on the shaven wood he clipt  
These tender words in secret script:  
'Long have I watched and waited here,  
To see thee whom I love so dear;  
—Love thee!—Nay more, my life thou art,  
As close united to my heart  
As to the hazel is the vine—  
The fragrant-blossomed eglantine:

His every leafy branch is wound  
By her sweet tendrils, round and round;  
And when she's torn from his embrace,  
Both fade and wither, and die apace.  
Dear love, with us 't is even so,  
When kept apart, no life we know.'

*Enter the COUNT in hunting costume.*

COUNT.

What! Are these silly janglings never to cease  
Within my walls? Say, madam, must I find,  
Each day when I return, all sweat-bedrenched  
From manly chase, a score of perfumed boys  
Stretched at their ease before thee, strumming rotes,  
And chanting lays of hot adulterous love?  
Methinks thy time is most unwifely spent;  
Ere long the serving-maids will be employed  
In mixing potions thou may'st drink, and thus  
Excuse the deeds these wanton songs inspire;  
And every hazel-tree for miles around  
Will bear a carven name for trysting-sign.

COUNTESS.

The hunt hath overheated you, my lord;  
You do not mean these words — you cannot dream  
That I should be forgetful of my vows.  
Have I not held your side in storm and calm?

COUNT.

Truce to thy pleading! So art thou imbued



With these soft phrases, thou might'st charm me deaf  
To all my fears. 'T were well to look before,  
Not sink in stifling sweet remembrances.  
I never found that one who loved to hear  
Such amorous tales, longed not to act them too.

COUNTESS.

My lord, whatever hospitality I show  
To this fair band of gleemen is but due  
To our son's memory, for he, perchance,  
Is somewhere heard, and praised, and lodged, and fed,  
As these are here; or he may suffer cold,  
Hunger, and thirst, as these have often done.

COUNT.

Tush, woman, if thou speak'st the truth, this thing  
Is worst of all. Never would he have gone  
Into his vagabondage, were it not  
This vicious minstrelsy, dinned in his ears  
From boyhood, had so filled his idle brain  
That all the proper knightly faith he owed  
Was driven out. And so he chose to be  
A rambling singer, lowest of the low!  
These caitiffs—O ye filthy scum of earth!—  
These churls, I say, have robbed us of a son,  
And knighthood of a flower that promised well.  
Have they not done enough? Or wishest thou  
To lose our other son, or my own love?

COUNTESS.

You do mistake. Roland did not depart  
This house because infected by these songs.  
'T was rather that he did not wish to wed,  
Unless himself should choose. And not until  
You sent him word, returning after wars,  
That while away, you 'd found for him a bride—  
The daughter of the Count of Brittany—  
Did he so much as dream of minstrel-life.  
But when he learned your wish—'t was sudden, sire—  
He vowed that only love should be his guide,  
And, knowing your unbending will, stayed not  
To urge his cause, but left his home forthwith.  
I ween, if you should humor him in this,  
He would return.

COUNT.

I will not! By my faith,  
I will not! Let this be the final word.  
In vain thou 'lt plead for him. Who ever heard  
Of sons thus combating their sires' behests?  
Not in my youth, at least! But in those days  
We had not such a whey-faced minstrel-throng  
As these, who sing fantastic tales of love.  
Nay, ours were lusty troubadours, with hearts  
Tuned to the trumpet-clang; and in their songs  
We heard the echo of strong feats at arms,  
And thrilled with fire of war. Now, when I see  
Their followers, I long to slit their tongues,

For kindling disobedience and lust.  
Howe'er it be, thou need'st not favor them  
For the sake of him—I will not call him son—  
Who did not heed my wish, and I command  
Thou shalt erase him from thy memory.

COUNTESS.

My lord, I cannot, if I would.

COUNT.

Thou must!

And to that end, I will dismiss thy horde  
Of parasites. Henceforth no minstrel-knave  
Shall come within my gates. Now, by the mass,  
Here is another!

*Enter VIVIAN in minstrel-dress, bearing a rote.*

Well, my pretty lad,  
I trow thou hast been told of Aquitaine—  
How hospitable we are, how fond of song,  
And free of purse as praise. We're fain to know  
Thy metal. Prithee, chant a soothing lay  
Of love and mistresses, of fondling hands  
And burning kisses, such as Tristram had  
With belle Isoude.

VIVIAN.

My lord, I cannot this.  
I tell of things that I have felt or seen—  
Those only.

COUNT.

Sooth, what should that be, save love?  
Perchance 't is war, for, by thy seasoned face,  
I deem that thou hast known the battle-shock.—  
Ah, now I have it, thou art come to learn.  
In faith, here's one will teach thee all the rites.

VIVIAN.

Not so, my lord. I never had desire  
Either for love or war.

COUNT.

What jest is this?  
Naught else is there to sing of but of these.

VIVIAN.

Naught else? What of the beauties God hath spread  
Around us—field and forest, brook and stream?  
Of these I sing, and of the hunt and chase,  
That give the sweetest pleasures in the world.

FIRST MINSTREL.

Meseems our girlish friend would form a school.

SECOND MINSTREL.

Nay, hath already formed it.

THIRD MINSTREL.

With himself

The only pupil.

COUNT.

Varlets, get you gone!  
And bid your last farewell to these my halls,  
That shall be closed to you henceforth.

[*Exeunt* MINSTRELS, COUNTESS *following*.]

My lad,  
Thou speakest pithily. I'll hear thy song.

VIVIAN. [*Sings*]

O, the fields are green, with a silver sheen,  
Where the dew besprinkled lies;  
And violets peep from their dreamy sleep,  
With shrinking, half-shut eyes.  
'T is morn! 'T is morn! Come wind the horn!  
Let laughter echo long,  
And melody float from every throat,  
For life is all a song!

The courser champs his bit, and stamps;  
The boar-hounds fret their chains;  
The beagles bay at the long delay,  
And the hooded falcon strains.  
Sluggards, arise, and rub your eyes,  
Cloyed with your honeyed sleep!  
The deer in the brake are seeking the lake,  
And the hares from the covert leap.

Come, mount your steed, nor check his speed,  
Strong for the chase and fleet;  
Across the fields, the grass scarce yields  
To the touch of his flying feet.

The breezes smite till your eyes grow bright,  
And the blood in your cheeks is rife;  
Then you feel a glow at your heart, and know  
That to live is the joy of life.

COUNT.

I cannot thank thee, lad, but this I 'ld say:  
Thine is the only song that I have heard  
Since — O, I dare not count the years. 'T is long  
Since I have felt my heart so quickly throb,  
Or deemed the breezes bore a sound more sweet  
Than their own laughter. Thou hast waked my youth,  
And I would have thee ever with me. Stay,  
Canst thou not be a comrade to my son?  
For music, with its gentle-fingered touch,  
Hath power to guide the soul to right or wrong,  
And thine 's the master-hand.

VIVIAN.

Gladly, my lord,  
So long as you 'll desire.

[*Exit* COUNT.]

Now may I prove  
What kind of man is he to whom I 'm pledged.  
Marry, I know I 'll hate him. Why should I  
Be mated thus, to one I had not seen?—  
But truth, I would I had not come. I fear  
'T was Folly launched me on this voyage. Well,  
'T is done, and now I 'll bear my boldest face  
To match this manly garb. Look, there he comes!

What arrogance sits in his face! I knew 't —  
I'd sooner wed a Saracen than him.

*Enter GEOFFREY.*

GEOFFREY.

Pardie, art thou the knave my sire prefers  
To all the merry band that thronged our house,  
And made its pillars quake with purple laughter?  
Meseems the world is rolling backward. Next,  
I'll have a puppet to amuse me. Then,  
Who knows but I'll be cradled every night,  
And one shall sing me soothing lullabies.

VIVIAN.

In faith, it hath already come to this;  
Since fretfulness bespeaks a sleepy babe,  
I'll rime you into slumber-land.

[*Sings*]

Caroling low, caroling low,  
Through the nodding tree-tops the breezes blow;  
Caroling low, caroling low,  
Through the grassy meadows the brooklets flow;  
Caroling low, caroling low,  
The winds and the woods and the waters go,  
Crooning their songs for thee,  
All, little one, for thee.

GEOFFREY.

Thou saucy chit, methinks a sturdy cuff  
Upon thy lips would be a meet reward

For this thy baby-song. But no, I fear  
They would bleed milk. Now mark me well, my lad!  
Though thou art 'stablished here—for old men's whims  
Must needs be humored—keep thy tongue in check.  
Think not that primrose faces shall excuse  
Presumption.

VIVIAN.

Nay, nor that a haughty mien  
Gives warrant to abuse.

GEOFFREY.

I have no mind  
To listen to thy childish driveling.

[*Exit.*

VIVIAN.

So this is he to whom I should be wed.  
I'll gage I shall not. How to scape this fate  
Is now the question. I must ponder it.

[*Exit.*



## ACT II

*The Castle Courtyard. Enter the COUNT and GEOFFREY.*

COUNT.

Speak, Geoffrey, for I trow thou hast a mind  
Pregnant with question. Why art thou so mute?

GEOFFREY.

It is the reverence a son should feel  
Before his sire, that chokes my utterance.

COUNT.

Well said! I did but prove thee, for I know  
What thou wouldst ask — 't is of my pilgrimage,  
Whither and why I make it.

GEOFFREY.

True, dear sire.

COUNT.

My goal is Brittany; my purpose one  
Concerns thee nearly. Thou art of an age  
When thou should'st wed, and since thy brother Roland  
Hath sold his birth-right for a song — or less —  
And thou art heir, 't is meet that his betrothed  
Be thine. To compass this I'll see the Count.

GEOFFREY.

I am most grateful, sire, for this, and all  
Your kindnesses, which I shall study how  
To merit.

*Enter VIVIAN.*

COUNT.

Spoken like the son thou art;  
And, while I am gone, since thou 'lt be master here,  
I would have all things done as now they are;  
And, most of all, I 'd have thee spend much time  
In exercise, since blood, like iron, rusts  
With idleness. Here's one will second thee,  
For though a minstrel, yet he seems to have  
A knightly love o' the hunt.

[*To VIVIAN*]

Is it not so?

VIVIAN.

Right gladly will I join the chase, my lord,  
Though all unskilled. And when, with trophies won,  
The huntsmen homeward jog, I 'll stroke their ears  
With soother music than the snoring horn.

COUNT.

Good faith, methinks you 'll not lack merriment.  
Ho, Giles!

*Enter an ESQUIRE.*

Is all prepared? Our palfreys saddled?  
All the sumpter horses laden?

ESQUIRE.

Sire,

They wait your pleasure.

COUNT.

Let us, then, be gone.

We shall be absent twenty days, perchance —

Not less, I think. Till when, adieu.

[*Exit.*

GEOFFREY.

Not less,

I hope. Parbleu, I've not had breathing-space  
Since he came home from wars — what with the hunt,  
The bouts with swords, the polishing of arms,  
And such like tedious duties. Now I'm free,  
And shall enjoy the sweeter fruits of life.  
But best of all, I'm soon to take a bride —  
A round-limbed, full-lipped creature, I'm assured,  
Breathing of fire and love —

VIVIAN.

O, but she's not —

I know her — she is slender, maidenish,  
As cold and chaste as snow —

GEOFFREY.

How know'st thou this,

Or who she is?

VIVIAN.

Is she not Vivian,  
The daughter of the Count of Brittany?

In sooth, the veriest vixen in all France;  
A temper hath she like the month of March,  
Sullen and fretful.

GEOFFREY.

Naught care I for that;  
I warrant I can tame her. An she prove  
Of form unlovely, that were greater ill;  
Yet may she serve a time.

VIVIAN.

And then?

GEOFFREY.

Why, then,

Methinks I'll do as other husbands use,  
When weary of their wives.

VIVIAN.

As other beasts!

GEOFFREY.

Hark ye, my lad! I warned thee once before,  
I would not brook thy insolence.  
Remember who I am.

*Enter RETAINER in hunting-dress.*

What want'st thou here?

HUNTSMAN.

Your horse is saddled, sire, and we await.

GEOFFREY.

An if ye stay for me, the evening dews  
Will daub your beards with hoar. I shall not hunt  
To-day, nor to-morrow — no, nor any day  
Until I list. But, ere thou goest, fetch  
A flagon, brimmed with wine.

[*Exit* HUNTSMAN.

Faith, there 's the hunt  
Hath charms for me. When one hath reached the end,  
He 's the more ready to begin anew;  
But in the deer-chase, when the quarry 's struck,  
All 's done. And what is gained? A haunch of flesh,  
Which one might have for the asking. Why be Count,  
If I must toil and labor, like the herd  
Of common churls?

*Enter* HUNTSMAN *with flagon and two beakers, which he fills.*

Nay, here's a better way  
For one of noble birth to spend his time.  
What sayest thou, lad?

VIVIAN.

Nothing that I think;  
And since I would not flatter, nothing else.

GEOFFREY.

Marry, thou wilt not be a minstrel long,  
An thou dost not become an arrant liar.

Perchance that were as well. The monkish cloth  
Would better suit thy color. Thou might'st frown,  
As thou dost now, on all our petty sins,  
And, for a penance, make us hear thy songs.—  
Be not so vexed, good knave, I do but jest;  
I would be merry; rime me some brisk tale  
Of love and ladies, such as most befits  
A festive day, when wine is flowing free.

VIVIAN.

I know a drinking song, an that might serve.

GEOFFREY.

Most royally! I'm fain to hear thy verse.

VIVIAN. [*Sings*]

One spring-time morn I lay in idle ease,  
And listened to the laughing of the breeze,  
For life was young, and all seemed meant to please;  
And from my throat a song leapt up.  
No day of churlish toil and sweat was mine;  
While others tilled the ground, and trained the vine,  
And pressed the purple grape, I poured the wine  
And drained the brimming cup.

GEOFFREY.

My faith, this is the strangest drinking song!  
But sing the rest. It hath a pleasant air.

VIVIAN. [*Sings*]

But ah, how changed, when chill the evening came,  
No longer through my body coursed the flame;

I sought the cup — the charm was not the same;  
The wine was bitter as the lees.  
The peasants have few joys, and few require  
Save cardinal, fresh bubbling from the fire.  
Within my heart still burns the old desire,  
But pleasure cannot please.

GEOFFREY.

A plague upon thee. Are thy sugared cates  
All tinct with wormwood thus? Come, drink with me,  
And drown thy folly! Thou wilt soon unsay  
These dreary moonings, only meet for monks.

VIVIAN.

Why, such, fair lord, you said that I did seem,  
And 't were a foul discourtesy should I  
Belie your judgment.

GEOFFREY.

Tush, lad, let it pass!  
Make merry with me, as a minstrel should,  
And here 's a song that more befits the day:

[Sings]

O, I love women, and I love wine;  
They share my tenderness equally,  
And equally wilder this brain of mine  
With a sweet and lovable ecstasy.  
How fair is she, and he, how strong!  
This is the burden of all my song.

When the wine flows into my thirsty heart,  
And when I thrill to my mistress' kiss,

Through all my body the soft flames dart,  
And I chant in wondrous excess of bliss;  
How fair is she, and he, how strong !  
This is the burden of all my song.

Nanette, fanning the fire of love,  
Gives to the wine a sweeter zest;  
So does the cup her beauty improve,  
And her charms are in fairer light confessed.  
How fair is she, and he, how strong !  
This is the burden of all my song.

And when unkindly has frowned her eye,  
What but the nectar has soothed my pain ?  
A score of times she hath made me die,  
And the wine hath given me life again.  
How fair is she, and he, how strong !  
This is the burden of all my song.

GEOFFREY. [*Speaks*]

Now drink a toast with me, my bonny boy;  
Here 's a long journey to my sire — to me  
A speedy marriage. [*Drinks*]

Here 's a buxom wife,  
Whose lips I 'll open as the robber-bee  
The half-blown rose, and suck her sweetness out,—  
And here 's the other fragrant flowers I 'll kiss  
When surfeited with her. [*Drinks*]

Come, drink the toast !  
Thou hast not touched the cup.

VIVIAN.

I will not.



GEOFFREY.

Drink,

I say thou shalt. Nor this one toast alone,  
But many after. First, to my betrothed,  
The flower of Brittany. An thou wilt not,  
By Peter's beard, I'll pour it down thy throat !

VIVIAN.

A courteous host art thou to threaten thus !  
What though a minstrel, am I not thy guest ?

GEOFFREY.

Did I invite thee, churl ? Come, wilt thou drink ?

VIVIAN.

I will when thy betrothed becomes thy bride,—  
And that will never be.

GEOFFREY.

Thou liest, knave !

*[He approaches her with the cup, but she strikes it with  
her hand, dashing the contents in his face.]*

By Jesu's blood, I'll have thee whipped for this !

VIVIAN.

As thou wilt have thy wife, methinks, when she  
Hath used thee likewise — and she will. *[Exit.]*

GEOFFREY.

Pardie,

Who would have thought the varlet had such spleen ?

I 'll punish him. But how? 'T were not enough  
To flog him, and then banish from our lands.  
Best wait until my sire returns, ere when  
I shall devise a keener grief for him.  
Meanwhile, that I may have companionship  
Of merry lads, I 'll bid Johan admit  
All minstrels that may happen to our gates. [Exit.

### ACT III

*The Castle Courtyard. Midnight. Enter VIVIAN.*

VIVIAN.

I cannot sleep. The tender breath of night  
Seems all atremble for the summer's kiss,  
And Nature yearns with voiceless murmurings  
That wake my soul to sigh in unison.  
Now should the nightingale, that long hath hid,  
Like a sweet odorous flower, her throat from light,  
Swell forth her passion in a rippling flood,  
Whose every drop my ears would strive to hold,  
As reeds that bend beside the rivulet.  
See how the evening star draws near the moon,  
More bright than he. I wonder if 't is true,  
As poets feign, that if I pray to her,  
She 'll grant a meeting with the one I love.  
But I love no one. 'T is a foolish thing,  
Yet will I pray, and see what comes of it.

[*Sings*]

Evening-star, O evening-star,  
Brighter than the moon,  
If the lover's guide you are,  
Lead my true-love from afar,  
Lead him to me soon;

Hear my prayer, O evening star,  
Grant that dearest boon.

[*Voice from outside—sings*]

Star of the night, lean from yon height,  
And look down where my lady lies;  
Let fall your gentlest beam of light,  
To rest aslant her dreamy eyes.  
And whisper to her, star of night,  
That one who long hath loved her, all unseen,  
Will find her though the world be fixed between.

Star of the night, guide me aright,  
And lead me where my lady lies;  
I'll bend to kiss her forehead white,  
And wake her smile of sweet surprise;  
Then may we know the dear delight  
Of lovers, meeting, heart close pressed to heart,  
Whom, ages long, the world hath kept apart.

VIVIAN.

Was that a minstrel? Nay, no minstrel's voice  
E'er held so little earthliness. Perchance  
It was a fairy; or there was no voice.  
My fancy charmèd by the night's sweet spell  
Hath but imagined it. Yet sooth, I would  
The witchery might seize me thus again.

VOICE OUTSIDE.

Ho, watchman, pray unlock your hostile door,  
And give a wanderer shelter for the night.

VIVIAN.

O evening-star, I trow you heard my prayer;  
Now may this stranger prove to figure forth  
All that his voice has presaged. Tall and straight,  
Lithe as a willow should he be. In face  
Not beautiful, but gentle. Soft, he comes!

*Enter* ROLAND.

ROLAND.

Ho, lad! I thought I heard a woman's voice.

VIVIAN.

Was't you that sang?

ROLAND.

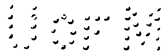
Nay, lad, 't was you. My song  
Was but the echo. Tell me, why stir so late?  
Had I not come, your melody were lost  
On careless breezes.

VIVIAN.

Who, that loves to live,  
Could sleep on such a night, when life is sweetest?  
Besides that I like solitude — or did,  
A moment gone.

ROLAND.

Then here upon this bench  
We'll sit and talk, until the restive day  
Breaks in upon our quiet. Sure, you're young!



That clear, unwavering tenor never yet  
Hath felt the rough'ning breath of kindless time.  
The flower of youth blooms fair within your cheek,  
All dimpled like a maiden's. Why, methinks  
You blush.

VIVIAN.

In troth, I'm seventeen, and there  
You scarce can boast four years, to overcast  
The argument.

ROLAND.

But they have far outworn  
The bloom of boyhood. Let us not quarrel.  
I like you well, nor could I love you more  
Unless you were the maiden that you seem.

VIVIAN.

And if I were — why, then ?

ROLAND.

Faith, this is rare !  
A minstrel, yet unversed in ways of love !  
You must be taught forthwith. Were you a girl,  
I'd thus enclose you with my arm, and hold  
You close to me, and to your dewy lips  
Mine own enrapt would draw.

VIVIAN.

And do you use

All maidens so ?

ROLAND.

Nay, only one, dear lad,  
Whom I shall love, so long as life remains ;  
I do confess I have not found her yet,  
Wherefore I roam the country, visiting  
The castles of our knights, where 't is most like  
The fairest maidens may be seen.

VIVIAN.

And she,  
The mistress whom you seek, how should she look ?  
Have you prefigured her ?

ROLAND.

Cheeks should be hers  
Like primroses that glow in Marchy winds ;  
Her eyes like dew-bright pansies, and her mouth  
Fragrant and soft as the carnation flower ;  
Her throat as pure as white-thorn—

VIVIAN.

Why, methinks,  
You 'd love a garden.

ROLAND.

Thou 'rt a saucy elf.  
In sooth I cannot catalogue her so;  
But this I ween, she shall be like to you,  
And till I find her, I would make of you  
A comrade. Wilt thou share my wanderings?  
Perchance thou, too, may'st find a lady-love.

VIVIAN.

O, never one, for whom I would leave thee.

ROLAND.

Tush, have a care of such rash vows. They break  
So easily, that scarce the anchorite  
Can keep them whole.

VIVIAN.

Most sure, I'll not be first  
To break our comradeship. But, pray, thy name;  
I'd fain know that.

ROLAND.

'T is Roland, named for him  
Who won renown at Roncevalles. And thine?

VIVIAN.

Is Vivian.

ROLAND.

Who fell at Aliscans.  
That were enough to bind our hearts as fast  
As Amis and Amiles. We are pledged  
Until we find our mistresses.

VIVIAN.

Until?  
O may that sweet 'until' stretch out across  
Time's chasm, into the dim eternities.

ROLAND.

This is a strong devotion that thou urgest;



Most strange, withal. Truly, dost thou not wish  
It were a maiden sat beside thee here,  
Whom thou might'st thus enfold within thy arms,  
As I hold thee?

VIVIAN.

Nay, truly, do I not.

ROLAND.

How well art thou assured ! 'There's few can boast  
So firm an armor 'gainst a maiden's charms.  
What, let me see thy face ! Ho, sweet my friend,  
The secret's there ! That eyelash shyly drooped,  
And that rich crimson cheek have thee betrayed.  
Ay, every word thy silver voice hath chimed  
Confirms thy maidenhood.

VIVIAN.

Ah, fickle moon,  
To shame me so ! I did too much confide  
In my disguise, Pray, take thine arm away,  
My friend ; I suffered it too easily.

ROLAND.

But why ? To place it back again ? Methinks  
It were a waste of time. Thou hast revealed —

VIVIAN.

Too much that ill beseems a maiden. Sooth,  
Thou need'st not think it sooth that I revealed;  
I will unsay it all.

ROLAND,

Then say it all,  
Again? Dear Vivian, I pray thee, do;  
For I would hear it fifty times.

VIVIAN.

Not so,  
But thou, instead, shouldst tell thy love for me;  
And I would scorn thee, till in dull despair,  
Thou hadst much languished at my feet, and sighed,  
And rimed me tender songs.

ROLAND.

Why, so I will.

[Sings]

Love in her eyes lies sleeping,  
For twenty years unstirred;  
Within the blue depths keeping,  
By passion's storm unblurred.  
I envy Love that dwelling,  
And yet it brings despair,  
Lest, my heart's call repelling,  
She sleep for ever there.

Recalls a tale, implanted  
In childhood's bygone day,  
How in a wood enchanted  
The Sleeping Beauty lay,  
Until a prince came, breaking  
The charm that held her fast,  
And, at his kiss awaking,  
She lived and loved at last.

So sleeps thy love, enchanted,  
Enchanting all that see;  
Would that the fairies granted  
That princely boon to me,  
To break the spell, repressing  
The fears within me rife,  
And, with my lips caressing,  
To wake thy love to life.

VIVIAN.

But I would not believe thy songs, because  
Thou art a minstrel. I would thus reply:

[*Sings*]

He wrote her rimes and roundelays,  
And hymned his love in divers ways;  
'Dear heart,' he sang, 'I love but you,  
I love you ever, love you true;  
You are the light of all my days.'

She blushed beneath his ardent gaze,  
Her young soul thrilled with sweet amaze;  
Untaught till then, she never knew  
A poet's love.

She little guessed that all his praise,  
His burning words and passioned phrase,  
Were given to many another, too,  
For out of art his amours grew;  
And tend'rest verse oft-times displays  
A poet's love.

ROLAND.

O, that were most unkind, for well thou knowest  
I ne'er loved any else.

VIVIAN.

Thou hast not said,  
As yet, thou lovest me.

ROLAND.

Why, every word  
I spoke hath said it, and I would be wed  
With thee, soon as thou wilt.

VIVIAN.

Haste not so fast !  
Perchance I am betrothed to some one now,  
For parents oft do this.

ROLAND.

O that is naught;  
Why, even I am so by contract bound  
To a noble lady, daughter of the Count  
Of Brittany.

VIVIAN.

What jest is this thou speakest ?  
Thou art not son to him who owns these lands,  
Sir Lionhard of Aquitaine ?

ROLAND.

My faith,  
I am.

VIVIAN.

And thou art, then, that elder son,  
Of whom I learned this very eve—that he  
Had gone from home to minstrel life. But why ?

ROLAND.

Because I would not wed, save whom I chose.

VIVIAN.

And now, I think, thou hadst regretted it,  
And hadst returned to gain thy heritage.  
It were most wise, for thou didst wrong to scorn  
One whom thou hadst not seen. Belike she 'll prove  
Well worthy of thy love.

ROLAND.

Howe'er that be,  
I 'll none of her, for thee alone I love,  
And thee will wed, or not at all.

VIVIAN.

Meseems

That thou shouldst mate with one of gentle birth,  
As is thine own, not with a lowly maid.  
This lady, thy betrothed, is fair of face —  
Or so they say — and not unlike to me.  
I deem she 'll love thee scarcely less than I.

ROLAND.

Of her I reckon not, nor of gentle birth —  
For that I have renounced. But had I not,  
It were the same, I love thee, dear, so well.  
But when I wed thee, if I may, I 'll have  
A father's blessing. This requires deceit;  
My purpose is to stain my face and hair,

And sing before him. If it please, I'll crave  
A boon, which is, to marry whom I list.

VIVIAN.

Will he not know thee?

ROLAND.

Nay, three years it is  
Since he hath seen me; was away at wars.

VIVIAN.

But he is now from home, nor may return  
These many days.

ROLAND.

Why, 't was to-day I heard  
That he was homeward bound, not far from here;  
Where he had been I know not. With thy help  
I'll cozen him, and then we may be wed.

VIVIAN.

If I may help thee, gladly will I do it;  
But, prithee, let my secret not be known.

ROLAND.

Trust me, dear Vivian.

VOICE OF THE WATCHMAN FROM THE TOWER. [*Sings*]

The dawn ! The dawn ! The night is fled !  
The eastern sky is streaked with red ;  
The dawn, the dawn is come !

VIVIAN.

Is 't so near day ?  
Then we must part, or be discovered here.

ROLAND.

But one more song :

[*Sings*]

Bright thou art, O morning star,  
In the morning-skies;  
But the light is brighter far  
In my true-love's eyes.

Fair thou art, O morning flush;  
But how wan and weak,  
Placed beside that fairer blush  
In my true-love's cheek !

Dear thou art, O morning-gold,  
Precious wealth and rare;  
But a dearer wealth I hold  
In my true-love's hair.

Clear thou art, O morning tone  
In the song-bird's note;  
But a clearer sound is blown  
From my true-love's throat.

Sweet thou art, O morning-dew,  
That the queen-bee sips;  
But a sweeter drug I drew  
From my true-love's lips.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

## ACT IV

*Hall in the Castle.*

COUNT, VIVIAN, ROLAND and RETAINERS *discovered.*

ROLAND. [*Sings*]

Sir Roland lies beneath a lofty pine,  
And gazes out toward Spain, with dimming eyes;  
Then he remembers him of many things—  
Of all the lands his conquering arm hath won,  
Of sweetest France, and his ancestral line,  
Of Charlemagne, his lord, who nourished him,  
And of the Franks, by whom he is so loved.  
He does not weep nor moan nor make lament,  
Nor is he all forgetful of himself,  
But owns his sins, and prays to God for mercy:  
'O thou true Godhead, who hast ne'er deceived,  
Who Lazarus hast raised from the dead,  
And guarded Daniel from the lion's maw,  
Guard thou my soul from harms that threaten me,  
Because of sins which in my life I did.'  
So praying, he extends his glove to heaven;  
Saint Gabriel receives it from his hand.  
The Count reclines his head upon his arms,  
And clasps his hands, and so departs this life.  
Then God sends down his holy cherubim,  
With them Saint Michael of the perilous sea,  
And, guided by the Angel Gabriel,  
They bear Sir Roland's soul to Paradise.



COUNT.

Most nobly told ! But that the sultry suns  
Of three-score summers had dried up my tears,  
I ween mine eyes had dropped their dearer praise,  
For not since childhood have I been thus moved.  
Where hast thou learned this geste ? I had not thought  
The minstrel lived could sing it now.

VIVIAN.

My lord,

He learned it in his father's castle. Where  
This is he knows not. He was but a child,  
When stolen by the Saracens, with whom  
He hath been reared.

COUNT.

Why speaketh not himself ?

VIVIAN.

With long disuse, he hath forgot our tongue,  
Save for these songs, from cradle crooned to him.

COUNT.

Marry, this is most strange !

VIVIAN.

Most strange, my lord,

And marvellous it is. But see his face—  
How burned by southern heat.

COUNT.

So it appears ;

And sayest thou he knoweth not his land ?

VIVIAN.

So he avers, but still his memory holds  
An image of the castle. When he sees,  
He trows that he will recognize his home;  
Wherefore he roams the land, and visits all  
In search. And, sire, he craves this boon of you:  
Whene'er his quest is done, if he hath need,  
That you will help him gain his heritage.

COUNT.

Right gladly, if he shows just claim thereto.

VIVIAN.

Most humble thanks, my lord. And one thing more :  
He asks that you will bless this ring he wears.

COUNT.

This is a strange request, yet I am fain  
To grant it. Bid him chant another geste,  
Or tell his own adventures, which should be  
Pleasant to hear.

*Enter GEOFFREY.*

But hold ! Anon I'd list,  
For now I must hold converse with my son,  
Alone.

VIVIAN.

My lord, we will await your pleasure.

*[Exeunt ROLAND and VIVIAN.]*

GEOFFREY.

Sire, hath this smooth-tongued, dissembling knave  
Been cozening you again ?

COUNT.

Again, thou sayest !

What mean'st thou ?

GEOFFREY.

Why, that you have been deceived  
In him — naught else, I do assure you, sire.

COUNT.

But how ? Be not so niggard of thy speech !

GEOFFREY.

In sooth, 't is nothing — I mislike his face —  
But tell me, sire, why come you back so soon ?  
Surely you have not been to Brittany.

COUNT.

Nay, Geoffrey, for the Count, as I am told,  
Had gone abroad to seek his daughter; — she  
Hath left his house, for some mad, girlish whim —  
I know not what. So I, perforce, returned.  
But we were speaking of our minstrel-lad;  
What hath he done that so displeaseth thee ?

GEOFFREY.

Why, troth, I did suspect him — let it pass —  
It was a trifling thing to trouble me.  
It may be he is innocent of harm —  
Most like he is. Pray, do not question me.

COUNT.

Speak, lad ! I say that I would know.

GEOFFREY.

But, sire,

Were it not better stay in ignorance  
Than buy your knowledge at too dear a rate ?

COUNT.

I bid thee, speak !

GEOFFREY.

But, ere I cast the die,  
I warn you that your honor 's in the hazard.

COUNT.

Speak !

GEOFFREY.

Last night, before the hour of twelve,  
I saw him come from out thy lady's chamber.  
Perchance she had been sleepless — had the boy  
To rime her soothing slumber-songs.

COUNT.

And this the lad that nothing knew of love !  
To rime her songs ! O my disastered soul !  
To find my danger where I least had dreamed !

[*Exit.*

GEOFFREY.

Pardie, the varlet has me much to thank ;  
Now he may get new thoughts whereof to sing —  
New feelings, too — if sing of them he can.

[*Exit.*

## ACT V

*The Castle Courtyard. Enter VIVIAN.*

VIVIAN. [*Sings*]

Dreaming, dreaming, dreaming of thee,  
When morn gilds the orient skies;  
Dreaming, dreaming, dreaming of thee,  
When the shadows of even arise.  
Day or night, it is ever the same;  
Since first the vision before me came,  
It hath lived, and shall live, like an altar-flame,  
Till the heart of Love's priesthood dies.

Dreaming, dreaming, dreaming of thee,  
That I kept thee a lover's tryst;  
Dreaming, dreaming, dreaming of thee,  
That thy breathing lips I kissed;  
And gazing into thy shadowed eyes,  
As pure and vair as the morning skies,  
I saw the tender love-light arise,  
Like the sun from the morning-mist.

Dreaming, dreaming, dreaming of thee,  
For dreams are the lover's art;  
Dreaming, dreaming, dreaming of thee,  
And that dream shall never depart;  
Nor would I wish from its thrall to be free,  
For though I knew thou cared naught for me,  
Still I would rather be dreaming of thee,  
Than be winning another's heart.

*Enter* COUNT.

COUNT.

How, lying knave ! What song is this I hear ?  
Didst thou not say thou couldst not sing of love,  
Because thou hadst not known it ? Answer me !

VIVIAN.

In sooth, my lord, I did. Since then —

COUNT.

Since then !

O matchless impudence; to boast thy crime  
To him thou hast dishonored !

VIVIAN.

Why, my lord,  
May I not love without dishonoring you ?

COUNT.

O monstrous thing ! What beast hath whelped thee ?  
Speak !

Is this the minstrel code — to love the wife  
Of him who harbors thee, and think 't no wrong ?

VIVIAN.

I have not loved her more than doth beseem,  
My lord, nor more than I love you.

COUNT.

Who, then,

I fain would learn, hath wrought in thee the flame  
Thy song disclosed ?

VIVIAN.

Your son, my lord.

COUNT.

My son !

O likely tale, that minstrels men adore !  
Enough of this. My son, whom thou dost love,  
Hath told me how he saw thee come by stealth  
From out my lady's chamber yesternight.  
What sayest thou to that ?

VIVIAN.

What should I say,  
But to deny ? -- And naught would that avail  
'Gainst your son's word.

*Enter ROLAND.*

ROLAND.

But I'll say more than this;  
And will assure you of his innocence,  
My lord, for he was yesternight with me,  
Here in the courtyard.

COUNT.

What, thou errant knight,  
Who canst not speak our Frankish tongue ! My faith,  
Think'st thou thy words are weightier than his ?  
A little while ago, he lied for thee;  
And thou dost well so nobly to requite him,  
But 't is in vain; thou canst not cozen me.

Begone, or thou shalt share his fate — which is  
To dangle from a tree outside my walls,  
As warning to the wanton minstrel-tribe.

ROLAND.

The lad is innocent — and here 's my sword  
Shall prove it, 'gainst the stoutest of your knights  
Dares challenge it.

COUNT.

Thou shalt not have the trial !  
I would not so debase a man of mine,  
To fight with thee, a nameless mongrel churl.

ROLAND.

My blood 's as good as thine.

COUNT.

What sayest thou,  
Bold prince of mendicants? As good as mine?  
It shall be drink for dogs, an thou speed not  
To pass my gates.

ROLAND.

I shall not go, my lord,  
Without the lad. You 'll have a surer proof,  
Ere long, that he is blameless as the heavens,  
And that your lady has been foully wronged  
In your suspicion.

COUNT.

Cease this dallying,



And go thy way. Leave me to deal with this,  
Or by my faith, I'll split thee like an egg.

*[Draws sword.]*

VIVIAN.

O stay your hand, my lord; I will confess  
The whole.

COUNT.

Confess! Thou hast enough confessed  
To forfeit twenty lives. Hell's dearest pain  
Could not atone for what thou hast confessed.

*[Moves toward her; ROLAND interposes.]*

Avaunt! Avaunt, I say!

ROLAND.

Hear us, my lord;

You would regret —

*[The COUNT raises his sword.]*

VIVIAN.

Strike not! He is your son!

*[The COUNT strikes at ROLAND, who tries to parry the blow, but the sword, glancing off his own, strikes his head, and fells him to the ground.]*

VIVIAN.

Ah, sire, your son.

*[Drops to her knees and bends over him.]*

COUNT.

My son ! It cannot be !

VIVIAN.

Roland, my love, O Roland, Roland, speak;  
Forgive me for the fault — I should have told.  
This foolish whim — forgive — Roland, my love.

COUNT.

Let me see 's face. In sooth, I think 't is he;  
Three years would change him much. And look ! The  
brown

Is but a stain — how pale the skin gleams through !  
Yet he 's not dead. Surely he cannot be.  
Ho, Giles ! Johan ! Bring water, wine. And this  
Is Roland — O my rash incontinence !  
But thou who so lamentst him — by what right  
Thy tears bedew his face — thy lips caress  
His brow ?

VIVIAN.

A better right than thine, my lord.

I loved him.

COUNT.

What is this ? No boy art thou  
To plead such love for him. A maid thou art.  
I should have guessed thee, long ere this. But, child,  
Grieve not so heavily; most like he 'll live.

*Enter RETAINERS.*

He hath no wound: the blow hath only stunned.

[To RETAINERS]

Bear him within, and place him on my bed.

[To VIVIAN]

And if he loves thee, naught will I withsay,  
But thou shalt have him. Why didst not reveal  
Thyself, before?

VIVIAN.

It was a maiden shame  
That sealed my lips—to wear such bold attire.  
It nearly cost the dearest life i' the world.  
Forgive me, sire.

COUNT.

An thou forgivest me.

[ROLAND is borne into the castle, VIVIAN following.]

*Enter RETAINER from outside.*

RETAINER.

My lord, the Count of Brittany is here;  
Craves audience.

COUNT.

Admit him.

[Exit RETAINER.]

Strange he comes

At such a time.

*Enter the COUNT OF BRITTANY, with retinue.*

BRITTANY.

Greetings, Count Lionhard  
Of Aquitaine. I pray you, pardon this,  
My coming so unheralded; but 't is  
An urgent quest hath brought me — nothing less  
Than tidings of my daughter. Is she here?  
Or any fair young minstrel lad, for so  
She is disguised?

COUNT.

My lord of Brittany,  
You come at fitting season, for I trow  
We'll drink the nuptial wine ere you depart —  
If 't is indeed thy daughter that of late  
Hath livened us with minstrel-song.

BRITTANY.

Well sped !

I feared a thousand evils; hardly hoped  
For consummation of our dearest wish —  
To have our children joined. For this to scape,  
My daughter fled my house, with vow that she  
Would never wed, save by her own desire.  
And of your son I lately heard the like.

COUNT.

But now, I ween that both are of a mind  
To bide our contract.

BRITTANY.

This is grateful news.

*Enter the* COUNTESS OF AQUITAINE.

COUNTESS.

Most welcome, Count; your daughter is within,  
Quitting her garb for that which more beseems.  
She hopes you may forgive.

BRITTANY.

Forgive? Ay, all;  
And thrice as much as all. Lead me to her,  
That doubt may cloud her eyes with tears no more,  
And I may know that sweetest happiness  
Of clasping in my arms a child restored.

COUNT. [*To* RETAINER ]

Attend my lord the Count of Brittany.

[*Exit* BRITTANY.]

And now, dear coz, is Roland yet astir?  
I trow thou wouldst hardly have left him else.

COUNTESS.

He hath revived, and will be here anon.

COUNT.

And of our gentle friend,— how knewest thou  
She was a girl, and daughter to the Count,  
Our guest?

COUNTESS.

She scarce had entered here, my lord,  
Ere that I deemed she was of tend'rer stuff  
Than men's; a keener glance failed not of proof.  
So yestereve I haled her to my chamber;  
There plied with question till she all confessed.

COUNT.

The visit might have been of dire import,  
Through my unbridled hastiness; but, love,  
Thou wilt forgive, and let the matter rest?

COUNTESS.

Freely, my lord, if aught be unforgiven.  
But here comes Roland.

*Enter* ROLAND.

ROLAND.

Vivian, my love!  
O sire, where is she? What hast done with her?

COUNT.

Whom mean'st thou, son? Our pretty minstrel-lad?  
In sooth, thou 'lt never see the knave again.

ROLAND.

What say you, sire? An you have done her ill,  
The dearest blood in Christendom's too poor  
To glut my venging sword.

COUNT.

Becalm thy rage.

These are unknightly mouthings, shameful oaths.  
He is unharmed, but gone from hence. And thou  
Shalt stay with us, and 'joy thine heritage.  
We overlook thy foolish errantry.  
To crown thy fortune, thy betrothed is here,  
And we will have thee wed, incontinent.

ROLAND.

It irks me, sire, to find you thus disposed;  
For, know you well, I would not have to wife  
This lady, though you offered all the wealth  
Of fifty heritages, and she were  
The richest-dowered maiden in the land.  
Another have I chosen, and shall have,  
Despite thy bidding. She it was, of late,  
In minstrel-guise sang here before you, sire.  
Marked you what wondrous fluty voice she had?  
Where'er she go, I 'll follow her. Not for  
The fleur-de-lis of France would I resign  
My lily flower, my love o' the tender eyes.

COUNT.

Thou pratest idly, boy. She whom for thee  
I chose, is just as fair, as lovable,  
Hath just as sweet a voice, as tender eyes,  
Will love thee even as well. Forget this lass,  
Of whom thou knowest not the birth.

ROLAND.

Nor care.

I love her. Naught can weigh the balance down  
'Gainst that.

COUNT.

Not even my will, thou impious boy?  
I say it shall. The daughter of the Count  
Is thy betrothed, and she shall be thy bride.

ROLAND.

And I say none but Vivian, my love,  
Shall e'er be mine.

*Enter COUNT OF BRITTANY, with VIVIAN in woman's dress.*

COUNT.

Dost thou withsay me still?  
Behold thy bride, daughter of Brittany!  
I bid thee go embrace her. See, dear Count,  
How he obeys! No opposition there!  
And sooth, I think that thou wilt find as little.  
How pliant to our wills the children are!  
Roland, why dost thou not fall on thy knees  
Before me, thanking for thy lovely bride?  
Is not my choice as fair as thine?

COUNTRESS.

My lord,  
'T is fortune rather should be thanked for this,  
Our undeserved felicity.



BRITTANY.

Most strange,  
How chance hath mocked our toils, only to grant  
Our dearest wish at last.

ROLAND.

My gracious sire,  
I sue for pardon. I know 't were much amiss  
To balk thy hest — yet were the past recalled,  
I doubt not it would fare as it hath done.

COUNT.

I fear it would, but I forgive thee all,  
For which the blow I gave thee hath atoned.  
As earnest of 't, thy birthright is returned,  
Which thou in noble rage of love hast spurned.

ROLAND. [*Sings*]

Long had I dreamed of the laurel wreath  
That circles the brows of conquering kings,  
And saw, in visions, my head beneath  
Such a trophy as only great victory brings.  
I dreamed of the tourney, the battle-din,  
My veins were thrilled by the battle-fire;  
The soldier's laurels my life would win;  
This was the goal of my heart's desire.

And then I dreamed of the minstrel's meed;  
In the realms of song would I spend my days,  
To hymn the hero's glorious deed,  
And be crowned with a monarch's garland of praise.  
Courage should burn in the eyes of men,  
And in ladies' tears, when I smote the lyre;

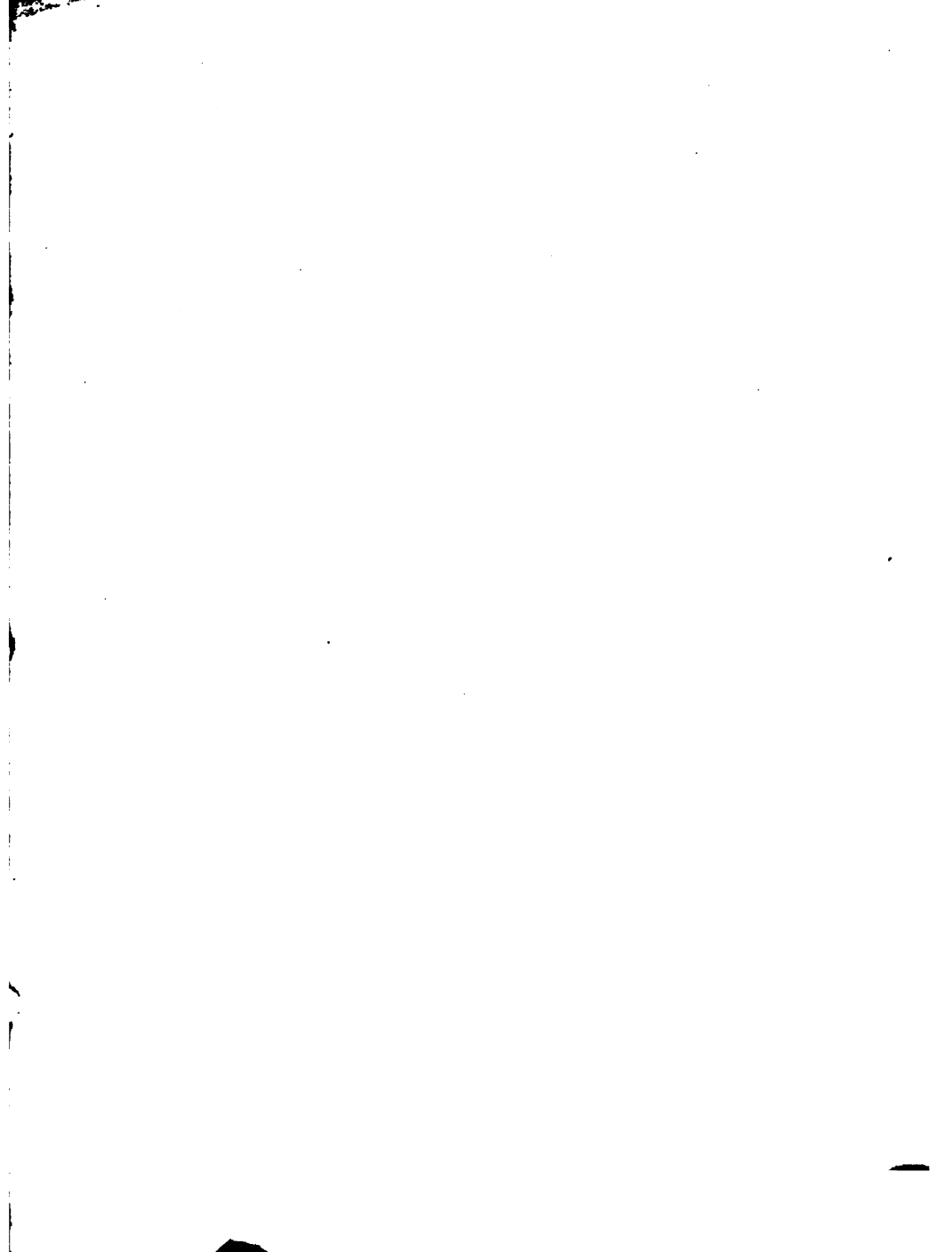
These were the laurels my life would win;  
This was the goal of my heart's desire.

But now I dream of the lover's prize,  
And naught in my fancy shall ever hold place,  
Save only my sweetheart's radiant eyes,  
Illumed with the light of God's holiest grace.  
The strife was ended, the song begun,  
When I saw enkindled the mystic fire;  
For this is the laurel my life hath won,  
And this is the goal of my heart's desire.

*Curtain.*







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